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### Maximizing your staycation

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A staycation is a great way to save money, reconnect with family and friends and see your city in a new light. As long as you formally make a plan, tell people about it and set ground rules like limiting technology and refraining from doing chores around the house, you're all set! Here are some staycation options sure to satisfy all types.

#### For couples...

Book the ritziest local hotel you can for a night or two! Live a different life for a night or two. Heck, role play strangers at a bar if you really want to get into it. [Vancouver's Fairmont Pacific Rim](#) is lovely, with its sexy extra large tubs with built-in mood lighting. [The Ritz in Montreal](#) is one of the most gorgeous city hotels I've ever stayed in with nice big comfy beds. On the East Coast, [The Algonquin Resort](#) in St. Andrews by the Sea, NB, is a grand dame of a resort, dating back to 1889, but was recently renovated.

If you want to get out of the hotel, it's always fun to kick back and relax with some great drinks, so why not tour a local brewery? Get out and experience some new brews!



Pictured: Hotel room at The Algonquin Resort



### ***For families...***

I find museums often dissolve into kids running around screaming. I think aquariums are a better bet. The ones in Toronto and Vancouver are both great.

Weather permitting, one of the best options is to head outdoors. Most cities will have organized events this time of year. Hop on public transit or jump in the car and explore a part of town they haven't seen. Introduce them to a new culture: Have they been to Chinatown? Little India? Many major cities also have hop-on/hop-off bus services so you can play tourist in your own backyard, going from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. You don't have to worry about parking and the kids will enjoy riding around on the double-decker buses.

A great perk of staying at a hotel/resort is nightly turndown service. Why not bring that glitz into your home? Buy some wrapped chocolates and each night, assign a different family member to go from room-to-room, folding back the sheets and putting a chocolate on the pillow. It'll feel very glam!

Another perk of being on vacation is that your rooms get cleaned. When you're out with the kids checking out aquariums and riding buses, why not splurge and pay someone to come and clean your house? You will not regret it.

### ***For individuals and friends looking for zen...***

A day spa is always a winner in my books, but my game plan is to get the biggest bang for my buck. If your benefits cover massages, milk that. Look for spas that offer extra experiences for free or very little cost. My minimum is a whirlpool, sauna and steamroom. That extends your sixty minute treatment into almost a whole afternoon. [Spa My Blend by Clarins at the Ritz-Carlton](#) in Toronto has been voted the best hotel spa in the world and it's clear why: you've got the pools and steam room, but also an amazing lounge area for before and after treatments, with free snacks such as nuts and dried fruits and flavoured waters. You can also be really decadent and order meals and wine. I ate a cheese board during a pedicure once. In Quebec I go for the traditional nordique experience, where you brave the chilly outdoors while enjoying steamy waters. [The Scandinave Spa](#) has two locations in Quebec, one in Ontario, one in Whistler.



Pictured: Scandinave Nordique Spa – Blue Mountain (Scandinave Spas)

### ***For those on a budget...***

Challenge yourself: Google "cheap Montreal" or "cheap Vancouver," review your options, pick your favourites and set a budget. How much can you do on \$30 a day? What about \$10? Look for pay-what-you-can theatre shows, free walking tours, street festivals, happy hours and cheaper bar menus at fancy restaurants.

Host your own film festival! With family/friends, choose a theme/genre, and have everyone pick one movie then spend the whole day having your very own film fest, with snacks galore! You can even up the ante and rate each film, with the person who selected the winning film taking home a prize.

The truth is, in a lot of cities, it costs a lot of money to see a high-end professional sports game. Don't underestimate how much fun lesser known leagues/sports can be. They're a great time and a heck of a lot cheaper. For example, while Toronto Maple Leafs tickets can be hundreds of dollars, the team's AHL affiliate, the Toronto Marlies, sell tickets for as little as \$10 each.

Cheap comedy: Check out your community's local comedy scene and you'll likely be surprised by how cheap tickets are to local comedy shows. In Montreal, for example, home of the Just for Laughs festival, you can get cheap laughs any time at the Comedy Nest. A \$5 ticket gets you into Newbie Tuesdays or Comedy Lab Wednesday – and then free admission for the big acts later in the week.